

CONSTRUCTING “NON-IDENTITY” AND “GLOCALIZATION” IN THE POST-9/11 WORLD IN SALMAN RUSHDIE’S *SHALIMAR THE CLOWN*

ABDELAZIZ EL AMRANI*

Abstract. *The present paper attempts to address the issue of “non-identity” and “glocalization” in the post-9/11 context in Salman Rushdie’s Shalimar the Clown. In other words, we are going to investigate the representation of and the relationship between the distant and the close, the local and the global, and the foreign and the exotic in the post-9/11 world, through an in-depth analysis of Salman Rushdie’s Shalimar the Clown.*

Keywords: *non-identity, glocalization, distant and close, local and global, post-9/11 world, Salman Rushdie’s Shalimar the Clown.*

Introduction

Situating himself in a position of perpetual in-betweenness, a migrant caught between three countries, unable to exist comfortably in any one, Salman Rushdie has always been a vehement supporter of discourses that encourage transworld, supraterritorial, transplanetary and “translocal mélange cultures”. He is, Edward Said contends, “the intifada of the imagination”¹, and his works operate “as agents of social, intellectual and cultural change, because they introduce whole new worlds”². Referred to as a post-9/11 novel³, Salman Rushdie’s *Shalimar the Clown* is seen as an example of how the contemporary postcolonial novel debates multiculturalism, globalization, identity, tradition, terrorism, neo-imperialism and Islamic radicalism. It has been described by many pundits as one of the key books of our time, as a novel that delves deeply into the roots of religious terrorism, and as an exploration of the post-9/11 world. Through *Shalimar the Clown*, Salman Rushdie attempts to celebrate the fluidity of identity, the dynamism of spaces and

* PhD student at both Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Faculty of Arts and Humanities Sais-Fez, Morocco and Amsterdam University, Faculty of Humanities, Netherlands, a.elamrani85@yahoo.fr.

¹ Said, “Against the Orthodoxies”, 262.

² Said, “The Road Less Travelled”, 416.

³ Indeed, 9/11 has signalled the emergence of new literature referred to as *9/11 literature* or *post-9/11 literature*. This type of literature revolves around 9/11 and its aftermath on individuals and societies alike. It also deals with the contemporary issues such as religion, religious radicalism, terrorism, globalization, tradition, etc.

the interaction between the global and the local. However, he seems to send a severe warning that cultural hybridism is withering and the discourses that encourage “non-identity” and creolized ‘mélange cultures’ are becoming less popular due mainly to the prominent re-emergence of primordialism or essentialism that treats identity as “fixed and organic, something pregiven, predetermined, or natural”⁴ and the significant comeback of religion into world agenda in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, jeopardizing the definitions of a ‘good multicultural society’. The present paper attempts to address the issue of “non-identity” and “glocalization” in the post-9/11 context in Salman Rushdie’s *Shalimar the Clown*. In other words, we are going to investigate the representation of and the relationship between the distant and the close, the local and the global, and the foreign and the exotic in the post-9/11 world, through an in-depth analysis of Salman Rushdie’s *Shalimar the Clown*.

Crossing Borders: Celebrating Non-Identity and Glocalization

It goes without saying that there is a burgeoning literature that deals with the multifaceted aspects of globalization. This literature is an attempt to demonstrate the fact that today the world is globalized and the borders seem to have ceased to exist. To show that the world has become borderless due to globalization and its accompanying technological developments, in his *Shalimar the Clown*, Salman Rushdie voices this concept of a borderless world and its implications: “everywhere was now a part of everywhere else. Russia, America, London, Kashmir. Our lives, our stories, flowed into one another’s, were no longer our own, individual, discrete”⁵. The most important point that should be emphasized here is that theories of globalization have moved from expressions of the process as ‘cultural imperialism’ or ‘neo-imperialism’, to analyses of the ‘hybridization’, ‘diffusion’, and interrelationship of global societies, the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as whole. Rushdie therefore attempts to claim that although globalization may yield a greater cultural similarity among peoples, this similarity tends to develop not through the imposition of one set of cultural values on another. Instead, cultural similarity tends to develop through the mixing of a diversity of cultural values, moving closer to Pieterse’s “cultural melange” than cultural hegemony⁶.

In this regard, Craig Calhoun confirms that it is a serious mistake to see globalization simply as the spread of capitalism and Western culture (448). To undermine the homogenizing thesis that sees globalization as a Western project or a euphemistic expression of Western imperialism, Rushdie seems to agree with Jonathan Friedman’s argument that “we are witnessing an emergence of an unstable phase of de-hegemonization” (168) and hence it would be wrong to say

⁴ Croucher, 36.

⁵ Rushdie, 37.

⁶ Cited in Greig, “The End of Geography”, 242.

that transworld connectivity is uniquely western. In his book *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, Bhikhu Parekh claims that globalization, of course, primarily originates in and is propelled by the West, and involves Westernizing the rest of the world] ... [Non-Western ideas also travel on its back and distort the West's own self-understanding ways of life] ... [Western exports do not make local sense unless they are adjusted to local culture] ... [Globalization, therefore, involves localization and at least some appreciation of and respect for cultural differences] (164).

This interaction between globalization and localization is clearly manifested in the novel when Rushdie says that be it in Kashmir or in New York, "everyone's story was a part of everyone else's" (141). In this sense, Roland Robertson suggests that the term 'glocalization'⁷ more adequately describes the relationship between the local and the global as one of interaction and interpenetration rather than of binary opposites. Put differently, the local and the global should not be seen as simple opposites, but the local contributes to the character of the global. Stated concisely, neither the global nor the local ever exist in a pure form. They are not mutually exclusive and they are instead constantly in a state of interaction. Just as globalization can enhance the capacity for world citizenship, it can also facilitate the maintenance and flourishing of particularistic identities and attachments. Both the fear of the global as well as the disdain of the local are positions that neglect to take into account that, in reality, culture is both local and global, both national and transnational, both particular and hybrid, both native and cosmopolitan⁸.

Interestingly, *Shalimar the Clown* does not only tell the story of Pachigam, a small village in Kashmir. It is indeed global in its scope, beginning in and returning at the end to Los Angeles, moving to Kashmir, but also traversing Continental Europe and England. Its chief characters, Shalimar the Clown, Max Ophuls, Boonyi and Kashmira, are closely linked to global developments. As an emphatic champion of the hybrid and mongrel, Rushdie does not paint the community of Pachigam as homogenous but as variegated and syncretism. That is to say, in this era of intensified contemporary globalization and global diaspora, "familiar lines between "here" and "there," centre and periphery, colony and metropolis become blurred"⁹. By presenting his main characters as having world citizenship and global mindset, Rushdie tries to convey that essentializing discourses and practices that define the close and the far, the global and the local, the self and the Other, the familiar and the exotic are undermined by the new emerging processes of cultural hybridism and global migration. He therefore wants to confirm that

⁷ Unlike those who see globalization as a phenomenon that excludes and destroys the local identities and cultures, Roland Robertson affirms that "it makes no good sense to define the global as if the global excludes the local" (quoted in Ashcroft, 215). He formulates the dynamic of globalization as "the twofold process of the particularization of the universal and the universalization of the particular" (quoted in Revathi, 113). Instead of focusing on the global and the local as opposing forces, the term 'glocalization' is employed, Robertson argues, "to capture the dialectical and contingent interchange between local cultures and global trends" (Croucher, 26). Stated clearly, the global and the local interact, often to the point of drawing from each other, rather than being locked in mortal conflict in which local difference and particularity will be obliterated by global homogenization.

⁸ Vincent, 61.

⁹ Gupta and Ferguson: "Beyond culture", 10.

Diaspora communities and post-colonial world have traditionally served as a bridge between the particular and the universal.

In this respect, Bill Ashcroft maintains that global culture becomes the object of a critical appropriation by which the character of local identity is strengthened. The experience of the post-colonial world shows that change is not going to occur by futile attempts to establish fortress societies or to abolish globalism, but rather by strategies to transform it as global culture has been transformed by appropriation and adaptation. Ashcroft claims that post-colonial experience demonstrates the fact that the key to the resistance of the global by the self-determination of the local lies not in dismissal, isolation and rejection but more often in engagement and transformation. The diffuse and interactive process of identity formation proceeds in global terms in much the same way as it has done in post-colonial societies, and it is the model of post-colonial appropriation which is of most use in understanding the local engagements with global culture (209).

It is self-evident that the global and the local are in many ways complementary and necessary to each other in this era of intensified globalization rather than necessarily conflicting social forces as they once appeared. From this perspective, local culture is not dismissed, even if there is imbalance and inequality in terms of power relations, at the expense of global culture. Put in a nutshell, “globalization does not mean the end of segments. It means, instead, their expansion to worldwide proportions. Now it is the turn of African music, Thai cuisine, aboriginal painting and so on, to be absorbed into the world market and to become cosmopolitan specificities” (209).

Studying a concrete society, one can discern a plurality of cultural repertoires and this shows that societies do not form cultural wholes. Cultural practices are constantly changing through the processes of “*interweaving and retranslation*”¹⁰. In a similar vein, Rushdie believes that the world has never been stable and fixed, but always defined and redefined for many centuries by “shifting frontiers, upheavals, dislocations, flights, returns, conquests, and reconquests” (138). Accordingly, things are no longer defined and distinguished, in the ways that they once were, by their boundaries, borders or frontiers. This means that the idea that cultures are internally homogenous, static, distinct and geographically bounded is no longer tenable. Throughout his novel, Rushdie sheds light on the fact that cultures are diverse and subject to metamorphoses and changes and therefore “in civilization there are no borderlines” (141). At stake is that cultures are no longer defined in terms of their territories; they are unbounded and *detrterritorialized*¹¹. “All cultures”, Edward Said argues, “are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily

¹⁰ Interweaving refers to a constant interaction between different cultural practices that leads to mutual transformation. Retranslation is the process by which foreign elements are introduced into a culture, and it is central to the very construction of culture. Bayart, *The Illusion of Cultural Identity*, 136.

¹¹ The concept of detrterritorialization was first used by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to “designate the freeing of labor-power from specific means of production” (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia). But it became quickly used by others in various disciplines, especially in sociology and anthropology. Deterritorialization is referred to now as a cultural condition of globalization accounting for the displacement

differentiated, and un-monolithic."¹² Thus, in this context of globalization and global migration, people travel freely and both export and import new ideas. Thanks to all this, no society can remain culturally self-contained and isolated. So, there is no simple route of return into homogenous and unified cultures, because cultures are all marked and influenced by cultural hybridism.

To show the fact that places are dynamic and changing, Rushdie describes how Alsace, a French city, was historically subject to the Frenchification, de-Frenchification, and Germanification. In this era of incensed and multifaceted global flows, places, for Rushdie, "get smashed and then they are no longer the places they were" (363), and Pachigam, Shalimar's village, is a good example in that it changes from an idealized place through which peace and tolerance prevail to a battlefield between two fundamentalist ideological poles, Islamic radicalism and the Indian army. Rushdie also highlights the impact of globalization on spaces, and this is manifested in his description of Los Angeles, Paris, and Strasbourg as "shape-shifted" spaces (141) and therefore they are no longer themselves. This indicates that places are no longer firm, bounded and fortified, but rather they are dynamic and changeable spaces in which identities are in a constant state of interaction. More importantly, there is no doubt that *Shalimar the Clown* emphasizes, to borrow Jan Aart Scholte's terms, the fact that "social space can no longer be wholly mapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders" (17). Globalization entails a reconfiguration of social geography with increased transplanetary connections between people. More people, more often, more extensively and more intensely engage with the planetary arena as a single social place and as a result national frontiers or boundaries are declared as porous and deterritorialized. Thus, "space must be seen not as a firm and clearly bounded context of our being, but rather as an instance of our transience and alienation in the world." And within this space, Jamal Eddine Benhayoune argues, "there are no fixed realities, no local histories, and no stable identities — only change and constant revision and undoing of identities" (155-162).

Interestingly enough, a unitary, monolithic identity has no room in Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown*; rather, his work reflects a conception of post-colonial identity that is fluid, multiple, shifting, and responsive to varied situations and varied audiences. All characters in the novel experience of intentional or unintentional journeys in search of a desirable position for themselves and a stable definition of their identities. But after all, they live in no place, in a situation of not belonging. For Boonyi Kaul, Kashmira's mother and Shalimar's beloved, changing her place stands for the possibility of finding her identity far from her

of identities, persons, and meanings. In his book *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity*, Nikos Papastergiadis claims that the deterritorialization of culture refers to "the ways in which people now feel they belong to various communities despite the fact that they do not share a common territory with all the other members. It also refers to the way that a national or even a regional culture can no longer be conceived as reflecting a coherent and distinct identity. This attention to the way communities are connected, despite being spread across considerable distances, and redefined through exchange across multiple borders, has challenged the classical ethnographic assumptions that cultures could be mapped into autonomous and bounded spaces" (115).

¹² Said, *Culture and Imperialism* xix.

birth country. Boonyi “looked like a poem”¹³ but, after forsaking her husband, she found herself contaminated and lost. Realizing what she has done, Boonyi reprimands Max, who represents the American neo-imperialism and economic globalization: Look at me, she was saying. I am your handiwork made flesh. You took beauty and created hideousness, and out of this monstrosity your child will be born. Look at me. I am the meaning of your deeds. I am the meaning of your so-called love, your destructive, selfish, wanton love. Look at me. Your love looks just like hatred. I never spoke of love, she was saying. I was honest and you have turned me into your lie. This is not me. This is not me. This is you” (205).

Rushdie attempts to bring into the limelight the hybrid impurities of cosmopolitan culture. He maintains that “the loss of ... one family’s home” is “the loss of every home” (138), and thus more of the characters in the novel live in what Edward Said called “a generalized condition of homelessness,”¹⁴ a world where identities are increasingly coming to be, if not wholly deterritorialized, at least differently territorialized. Instead of seeking to recover some lost primordial homeland, the novel’s main characters are craving and yearning for embracing the global culture.

Further, the seduction of Boonyi by Max has produced a hybrid being, India or Kashmira Noman, the literal child of East and West, of the close and far, of the slow and fast and of the global and local, who lives in America and is left with no particular identity to cling to. Her father, Max, is somebody from everywhere; he is a polyglot cosmopolitan whose identity floats over global spaces. The message Rushdie wants to convey is that in this period of intense globalization “everyone in the world has two fatherlands” (140). In one of his interviews, Rushdie proclaims that “we all cross frontiers, in that sense, we are all migrant people”¹⁵. Basing on that, Rushdie presents his characters as having mobile and fluid identities. What is crucial is that the novel opens by describing Los Angeles as a city of rootless people, mostly immigrants, who live in a sort of limbo. For example, Olga, Kashmira’s neighbour, says that today I live neither in this world nor the last, neither in America nor in Astrakhan. Also I would add neither in this world nor the next. A woman like me, she lives some place in between. Between the memories and the daily stuff. Between yesterday and tomorrow, in the country of lost happiness and peace, the place of mislaid calm¹⁶.

Rushdie’s characters, living in a situation of not belonging, are chameleon-like in the sense that they easily change their identities and affiliations; their identities are shaped and reshaped, and surf from one space to another. At stake is that Rushdie’s novel seeks to account for the fact that “not belonging, a sense of unreality, isolation and being fundamentally ‘out of touch’ with the world become endemic in such a culture”¹⁷. The idea that should be pointed out here is that identity is always a process which is formed in what is called ‘*the third space*’, a zone that exists between the familiar and the foreign.

¹³ Rushdie, 100.

¹⁴ Cited in Gupta and Ferguson, 9.

¹⁵ Cited in Shailja Sharma, 597.

¹⁶ Rushdie, 9.

¹⁷ Rutherford, 24.

Moreover, there are many characters in the novel who live within the hyphen and these "mixed bloods" characters pose both a greater challenge and a greater danger to conventional definitions of the nation than "full blood" counterparts. In *Shalimar the Clown*, Boonyi, Shalimar's wife, transgresses the established moral, social and cultural values of her village, Pachigam, and escapes with Max, an American ambassador. She detests her village and is eager for liberation, and thus she accepts the ambassador's offer of change "in search of a future" (367). In fact, Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* sends a message to those who stick to their exclusionary particularistic identities that the words such as Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Jew etc. should be merely 'descriptions' rather than 'divisions'. Hence, all the major characters in the novels are global and cosmopolitan characters whose attachments and allegiances go beyond the taxonomies and confines of the nation-state. This due to the fact that globalization has tended to generate hybridism, where persons have complex multifaceted identities and face challenges of negotiating a blend of sometimes conflicting modes of being and belonging within the same self. Essentially, identities in a more global world are too multiple and overlapping to make sustainable 'us' / 'them' divisions into discrete communities. Under conditions of hybridity, persons who belong with 'them' in one respect belong with 'us' in another. For example, individuals who are bounded together when they emphasize a national aspect of their identity readily find themselves affiliated with other circles when they emphasize class, gender, race, or other dimensions.

In *Shalimar the Clown*, Rushdie celebrates cultural syncretism through presenting Pachigam as land of eternal beauty and charm where peace, love and brotherhood characterize the Kashmiri way of life. In Pachigam, Muslims and Hindus live in a peaceful coexistence because "the words Hindu and Muslim had no place in their story... In the valley these words were merely descriptions, not divisions. The frontiers between the words, their hard edges, had grown smudged and blurred. This was how things had to be. This was Kashmir" (57). By presenting Kashmir as the ideal world with its unique way of life where differences and divisions are non-existent, Rushdie highlights and explores "a vernacular form of cosmopolitanism"¹⁸. This local form of cosmopolitanism draws on the ideal of *Kashmiriyat*, the ethos or the values of Pashigam which serve as the basis for a vernacular cosmopolitanism. Drawing on the ideal of *Kashmiriyat*, Rushdie tends to erase or diminish the threatening aspects of religious and class differences. This point is clearly personified by Abdullah Noman, Shalimar's father, when he declares that Kashmiriness, the belief that at the heart of Kashmir culture there was a common bond that transcended all other differences] ... [So we have not only Kashmiriness to protect but Pachigaminess as well. We are all brothers and sisters here] ... [There is no Hindu — Muslim issue. Two Kashmiri- two Pachigami- youngsters wish to marry, that's all. A love match is acceptable to both families and so a marriage there will be; both Hindu and Muslim customs will be observed] (110).

¹⁸ Yumna Siddiqi , 293.

It is interesting to note that Rushdie invokes the ideal of *Kashmiriyat* in his portrait of the village of Pachigam, particularly in his description of the romance between Shalimar the Clown and Boonyi. Though Shalimar the Clown is Muslim and Boonyi is Hindu, their marriage is welcomed by the villagers and they are married in the name of *Kashmiriyat*. Their marriage, then, represents the triumph of *Kashmiriyat* and constitutes a national romance that bridges ethnic and religious differences. Significantly, Nikos Papastergiadis in this respect, asserts that identity is neither in the interior space of already known experience, nor doomed to the exteriority of an experiment with the unknown. Identity is thus never confined “to the space of an enclosed segment, nor is it projected onto an open plane, but is formed through the practices of bridging both differences and similitude, between the self and the other” (98).

At issue here is that while the romance between Shalimar the Clown and Boonyi serves to show how strong the spirit of *Kashmiriyat* is, this ideal is actualized in a more ongoing way in the novel through the medium of culture. This is to say that Rushdie wants to introduce Pachigam as culturally rich, hybrid and diverse, and, more significantly, to maintain that pre-colonial societies were almost always multi-ethnic and indeed included a great diversity of cultural repertoires. Before the advent of American Ambassador and other destructive forces, the Kashmiri people demonstrate that cultural or religious clashes have no room in Kashmiri community. They stress that “today our Muslim village in the service of our Hindu Maharaja will cook and act in a Mughal — that is to say Muslim — garden, to celebrate] [Here in Kashmir our stories sit side by side on the same double bill, we eat from the same dishes, we laugh at the same jokes (71). In Pachigam therefore people of all religions jointly participate in the arts that are the basis of the village’s sustenance, and when differences and hostility arise, they are muted by commonality and mutual respect. Rushdie in this regard challenges the idea that cultures should not be perceived as fixed, aloof, unitary and homogenous mass. Indeed, through his novel, Rushdie seems to underscore the fact that “all localities are porous and open-ended, overlap with other such contexts”]¹⁹.

Narrating 9/11: Constructing the Culture of Fear

Grappling imaginatively with the shock of 11 September 2001 and the wars that have followed, Rushdie’s cosmopolitan and plural view of the world seems to shake and dwindle. In *Shalimar the Clown*, the innocent, hybrid, multi-faith and multi-cultural world of Kashmir is destroyed by the intrusion of repressive forces. Increasing influence of alien presence on the Kashmiri landscape slowly starts corroding and degrading the values of Pachigam, the *Kashmiriyat*. This influence can be seen in the radical preaching of Bulbul Fakh, the ‘iron mullah’, in the conflict between Muslim Pakistani and Hindu India over Kashmir, and in the arrival of Maximilian Ophuls on the scene, the representative of American presence in the Subcontinent. Because of these external forces, Pachigam ceases

¹⁹ Eagleton, 48.

to exist. Charged with harbouring extremists, the village bears the full brunt of the atrocities of the Indian armed forces. Everyone is killed, people and life are totally obliterated from the place where love had once bloomed and blossomed. Idyllic Pachigam is ravaged and becomes only a name on outworn maps; "the village of Pachigam still existed on maps of Kashmir, but that day it ceased to exist anywhere else, except in memory"²⁰. The old Kashmir is seen as a tolerant and eclectic society crushed from all sides by "the new zero-tolerance world"²¹ (290). Through the novel, Rushdie expresses sadness for the ideal that has been lost in Kashmir and in so many parts of the world in general and the Muslim world in particular, the ideal of tolerance and secular pluralism. As a matter of fact, the American neo-imperialism, Indian army forces hyper nationalism and Islamist radicalism have put an end to Kashmiri civic identity.²¹

Crucially, the presence of the Indian army, the influence of US and the coming of the Jihadists from Pakistan help Islamic radicalism to spread in Kashmir. The Islamist radicals target Kashmiri moderate Muslim voices and impose the *burqa* and the veil on Kashmiri women. Under the supervision of the Iron Mullah Bulbul Fakh, the fighters are all instructed in the singularity of truth, the truth of a religious fervour that infuses their mission. The Iron Mullah, for example, says that the question of religion can only be answered by looking at the condition of the world. When the world is in disarray then God does not send a religion of love. At such times he sends a martial religion, he asks that we sing battle hymns and crush the infidel. The iron mullah says that at the root of religion is this desire, the desire to crush the infidel. This is the fundamental urge"²².

Rushdie criticizes the Islamist radicals who rely on the literal interpretation of the Quran in order to mobilize and recruit more followers. He shows us how extremists use religion to recruit, mobilize, and carry out violence in its name. Thus, the comeback of religion in the post-9/11 context serves, Bassam Tibi asserts, as an "idéologie mobilisatrice" (mobilizing ideology). At issue here is that a particularly prominent marker of difference after 9/11 has been religion; people's identity has been defined to great extent by religion. This resurgence of religious identity or religion in general is interpreted by some politicians and ideologues as a vindication that cultural identities are and will be the major drivers of clashes and conflicts, ignoring the fact that the narrow and singular definitions of identity are no longer viable in this diverse and changing globalizing world.

On similar lines, Amartya Sen suggests that religion is not and can not be an all-encompassing or exclusive basis for identity, and warns that "the

²⁰ Rushdie, 309.

²¹ In his article "Democracy and Terror in the Era of Jihad vs. McWorld", Benjamin R. Barber claims that civic identity, which is one of the components of democracy and multiculturalism, is undermined by two rival identities — ethnic and commercial (Jihad vs. McWorld). He assumes that "Jihad" and "McWorld" make war on the sovereign nation-state and thus undermine the nation-state's democratic institutions (251). He writes of 'Jihad' as shorthand for all the reactionary anti-modernisms and fundamentalisms of the world, and 'McWorld' as global economic integration (which he understands mainly in terms of the spread of Western consumer culture). So, the old secular Kashmir, which reflects Rushdie's utopian vision of the world, is destroyed by Maximilian Ophuls who represents 'McWorld' and the Iron Mullah Bulbul Fakh who stands for 'Jihad'.

²² Rushdie, 262.

insistence... on a choice less singularity of human identity not only diminishes us all, it has also makes the world much more flammable” (16). A major source of potential conflict in the contemporary world, then, is the presumption that people can be uniquely categorized based on religion or culture. To make some difference in the troubled world in which we live, Sen contends that the basic recognition of the multiplicity of identities and of the world beyond religious affiliations “would militate against trying to see people in exclusively religious terms, no matter how religious they are within the domain of religion” (83). Phrased in bolder terms, the neglect of the plurality of our affiliations obscures the world in which we live and can produce a narrow and misdirected view, and consequently a “solitary’s” understanding of identity can have divisive effects making the world potentially much more incendiary. In sum, conflict and violence are sustained today, no less than in the past, by the illusion of a unique identity.

Rushdie’s *Shalimar the Clown* is a powerful cry or call to the Muslims to reform their religion. In one of his articles, he claims that the dead hand of literalism is what is giving power to the conservatives and the radicals. If you want to take that away from them, you must start with the issue of interpretation and insist that all ideas, even sacred ones, must adapt to new realities] ... [All other major religions have gone through this process of questioning, but remain standing. An Islamic questioning might well undermine the radicals, but it won’t undermine Islam²³.

Influenced by Islamic Philosophers, such as Averoes, Rushdie is calling for the comeback of Islamic rationalism that goes beyond the literal interpretation of the religious texts. In his groundbreaking book *Orientalism*, Said seems to square with Rushdie when he ascertains that “the gradual disappearance of the extraordinary tradition of Islamic *ijtihad* has been one of the major cultural disasters of our time, with the result that critical thinking and individual wrestling with the problems of the modern world have simply dropped out of sight. Orthodoxy and dogma rule instead²⁴. Hence, in the post 9/11 world, the contemporary fundamentalist groups, not restricted to Islam but also involving various Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists in the developed world, especially the USA, seem to be engaging in carving a purer form of their religion, tradition and the authentic past through literal readings of religious texts with an aim to create homogenized, militant, nationalistic and religious identities.

Furthermore, through his novel, Rushdie contends that the return of religion today assumes the shape of a politicized religion. Religion serves as a political actor as well as a mobilizing ideology used by extremists to carry out non-religious ends. Although *Shalimar*, for instance, becomes a terrorist, he is motivated neither by nationalist fervour nor by religious zeal. The fight for a religious cause just provides a platform for *Shalimar* to cross over to the other side, to reach his target in America. *Shalimar*’s killing of Max can be seen as a clear sign that the global and the local and the close and the far are no longer enjoy a state of interaction

²³ Cited in Nathan Gardels, n.pag.

²⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, xxi.

as they once appeared due to hate crimes, ethnic profiling and cultural borders prevailing in the post-9/11 world. In *Shalimar the Clown*, Rushdie throws some light on the fact that religion is victimized or hijacked by both Christians and Muslims. In one of his debates about *Shalimar the Clown*, Rushdie remarks that the phenomenon we call Islamic radicalism actually contains very little theology. If you look at what they say, very little has to do with the content of the Koran, it's a much more political philosophy than a religion] ... [It's much more to do with the resentment of the rest of the world and anger about what has been done to them, etc] ... [I think it is a question that every religion, including Christianity, needs to ask itself — are you a religion or a political movement? They are getting very badly blurred in our time. The movements of the Christian coalition in America have more to do with the power politics of the United States than the teachings of Jesus Christ]²⁵.

This quotation displays clearly that in the post-9/11 world, religion and politics are more deeply interrelated. This amalgamation or marriage between religion and politics has in fact a destructive impact on cultural and secular pluralism, and it endangers the definitions of what some commentators call the 'good multicultural society'. In his book *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, John L. Esposito stresses on the fact that "much is now made of a "desecularization of society" as religion is recognized as an increasingly key factor in domestic, transnational, and international relations" (126)". The point to draw here is that the post-9/11 return of religion leads to de-secularization and this fact pushes some scholars to talk about the rise of what they call "post-secular societies" leading to the erosion of the discourses that have been celebrating "non-identity" and "glocalization" for decades.

Through his novel, Rushdie claims that cultural pluralism is withering, paving the way for the emergence of narrow and chauvinistic nationalism. What is at issue here is that *Shalimar the Clown* seems to shed light on the fact that liberal discourses that encourage cultural pluralism turn out to be ambiguous due to jingoistic and chauvinistic practices prevailing in most of the metropolitan spaces after the 9/11 attacks. These chauvinistic practices are fuelled through essentializing discourses coming from The White House in particular, stoking hatred and distrust around the world. Even so, by the end of the novel, Rushdie confirms that now, "there was no India. There was only Kashmira, and Shalimar the clown"²⁶. Through this deadly final confrontation between Kashmira and Shalimar the Clown, Rushdie asserts that it is a reborn and deterritorialized Kashmir that will replace the wounded and monstrous Kashmir that Shalimar the Clown represents. In other words, Kashmira's killing of Shalimar reflects Rushdie's future vision of the world where only peace prevails. Therefore, the novel represents a new life and a new beginning with the dissolution of all divisions and segments.

The multicultural and hybrid world is welcomed on the horizon that has no place for any kind of divisions or borders. Unsurprisingly, Rushdie finishes his

²⁵ Cited in Sarah Johnson, n.pag.

²⁶ Rushdie, 398.

novel with the idea that all divisions dissolve and disintegrate paving the way for the reign of Humanism, for the victory of the essential Life Force present in all of us.

Conclusion

All in all, *Shalimar the Clown* is an excellent novel through which Salman Rushdie highlights the roots of terrorism, the dynamics of culture, the construction of “non-identity”, the interaction between the local/far and the global/close, and the erosion of cultural hybridism in the post-9/11 world. Although he confirms that identity is no longer enthusiastically celebrated as a multiple and hybrid construct due to the prominent emergence of primordialism as well as the significant comeback of religion into world agenda in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Rushdie seems to end his novel by the fact that identity is not about determining a singular path that constantly closes down the horizons of becoming by pulling back everything to a single point of origin. While the role of the past is a significant force in the shaping of any identity, it does not have the exclusive power to determine all the possibilities for shaping identity in the present. Identity belongs to the past as well as to the future amalgamating tradition and modernity, the local and the global, the close and the far, the familiar and the foreign and the slow and the fast. This fact is clearly personified and manifested by the Arab youth who have already overthrown their dictators or the ones who are still protesting against the regimes. They have shown a great interest in reconciling between the global culture and their local cultures. What is interesting is that the Islamist discourse turns out to be a post-Islamist one focusing on the citizens’ central rights rather than intervening in individuals’ personal lives. Though the West expresses its concerns about the fact that the “Arab Spring” turns out to be Islamist, these concerns seem to be unjustified since the Islamists realize that the local can not sustain without the existence of the global.

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